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The District of LACOMBE, ALBERTA, CANADA.



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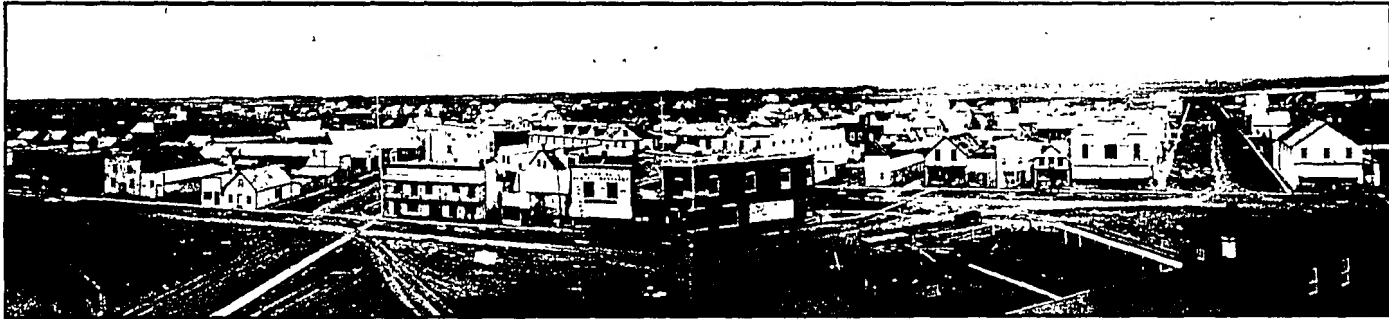




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LACOMBE PUBLIC AND HIGH SCHOOL



THE DISTRICT OF LACOMBE

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF LACOMBE

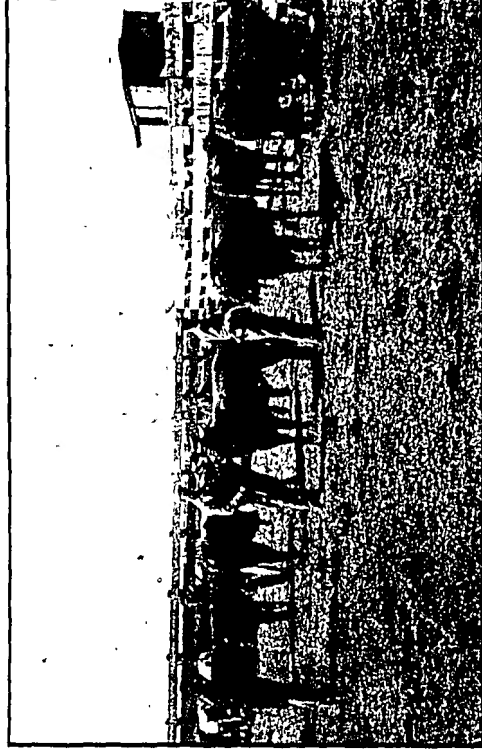
THE Town of Lacombe is named after the Rev. Father Lacombe, the well-known pioneer missionary of Western Canada, whose eminent character and services have made him an historic figure and entitle him to a place among the builders of the Dominion. The Lacombe Valley, in which the town is situated, midway between Calgary and Edmonton, on the C. & E. Railway, is probably the finest in Alberta, affording a magnificent view of prosperous farms and homesteads to the eye of the traveller. And within the Lacombe District, embracing an area of over four thousand square miles, there are other valleys as fertile and picturesque and of larger extent than can be seen from the railway car. The accompanying map and illustrations, showing the valleys, schools, churches, post-offices, etc., will give some idea of the fertility, progressiveness and extent of the district. Its southern boundary is the Red Deer River, the high-cut banks of which prevent business intercourse to the south. The sharp southward bend of this river, as reference to



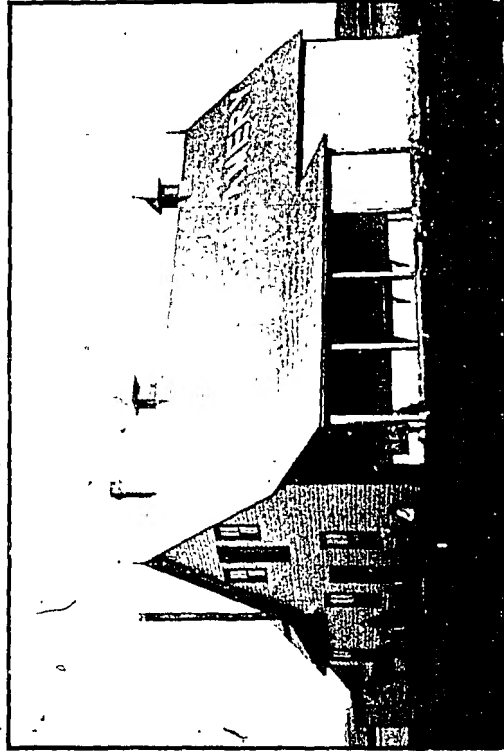
LAÇOMBE PURE BRED CATTLE GOING TO CALGARY EXHIBITION

the map shows, gives the district its exceptionally large area, an area in acres of two-and-a-quarter millions. Between the numerous valleys are gentle rises of land more or less timbered, and to the eastward considerable stretches of rolling country, affording ideal grazing, winter and summer. Creeks, lakes and springs, supplemented with wells from fifteen to thirty feet deep, afford an ample supply of water to the settlers. The soil, so often described as "the richest in the world," is, in its general character, a rich, dark loam with a clay sub-soil. Wood for fuel is unlimited and free to settlers. The deposits of coal are really among the largest in the world, cropping out all along the Red Deer River, the Battle River and some of the creeks, and is at present available to settlers for the cost of mining. For building purposes there is a good supply of timber, and nine sawmills are in operation manufacturing it into building material for the settlers. The climate, in common with that of Northern Alberta, of which there is a prejudiced impression abroad, is undoubtedly the best in Canada and superior to that of the Northern States. The winters are mild, the snowfall light, and settlers from more southern climes all speak in praise of it. Blizzards are unknown, and the cold spells of short duration. The influence of the warm winds of the Pacific, coming through the mountain passes, is distinctly felt all over the district when the more central and southern parts of the continent have months of continuous zero temperature.

Within the Lacombe District there are seventeen post-offices, ten churches and thirty-six schools, and the number of each is increasing every year. Many of the settlers who came to the district a few years ago with little or no capital, are now worth from ten thousand dollars to several times that amount,—such men, for example, whose homes illustrate this booklet and whose land could not be bought except at a very high figure. On the other hand, there are many others who would sell the same quality of land, equally well situated, at from eight to ten dollars per acre; and this, on the whole, is a better investment than the free homestead or railway lands, considering the conveniences and improvements immediately available and the



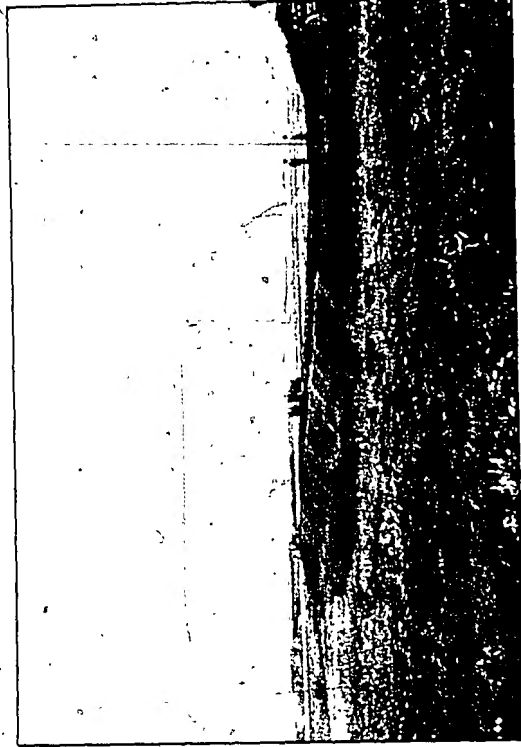
LACOMBE PURE-BRED CATTLE READY FOR SHIPMENT



LACOMBE CREAMERY

nearness to schools, churches and markets. These lands are being rapidly bought up by new-comers of judgment and enterprise, and the day of cheap lands in the Lacombe District will soon pass into history; for no sooner are these cheap farms bought by progressive farmers than they are worth double and treble the price at which they changed hands. It is a well-known saying that a new country is settled twice before it is settled right. Many of the first settlers have acquired a liking for the pioneer life, and after a few years will sell out cheap and move out to the newer frontier. The second settlers, who find it cheaper to buy these partly improved farms near the town and railway, are men who mean to stay and make it their permanent home; and while these cheap farms in the older and better settlements are obtainable, there is a splendid opportunity for those who have some means to acquire properties that increase in value more rapidly than the free lands.

The Lacombe District is peculiarly adapted to the successful raising of cattle. Among the first settlers in the locality were men who had previously been accustomed to the raising of pure-bred cattle. They were not long in coming to the conclusion that conditions in the district were favorable for their cherished pursuit. It was seen that enormous crops of oats, barley, turnips and hay could be grown with comparatively little trouble, and that the native grasses made an ideal pasture. What more was needed to induce enterprising men to enter a calling for which they had been trained from childhood? At the celebrated Calgary Show and Sale of Pure-bred Cattle, Lacombe has always stood well to the front. This sale was started in 1901, and Lacombe always shows more animals and takes more prizes than any other district in the Territories. The prices realized would average about one hundred and fifty dollars per head, the Shorthorn, Hereford and Polled Angus being the favorite breeds. There is room for more such breeders as we have, the prices realized are advancing, and, the district being so widely noted for its pure-bred cattle, orders are being received from all parts of the Territories and British Columbia. It looks as if Lacombe in this respect was destined to be the Aberdeenshire of the West.



SHOWING THE NEW RAILWAY GRADE FROM LACOMBE



GRADING ON NEW RAILWAY FROM LACOMBE

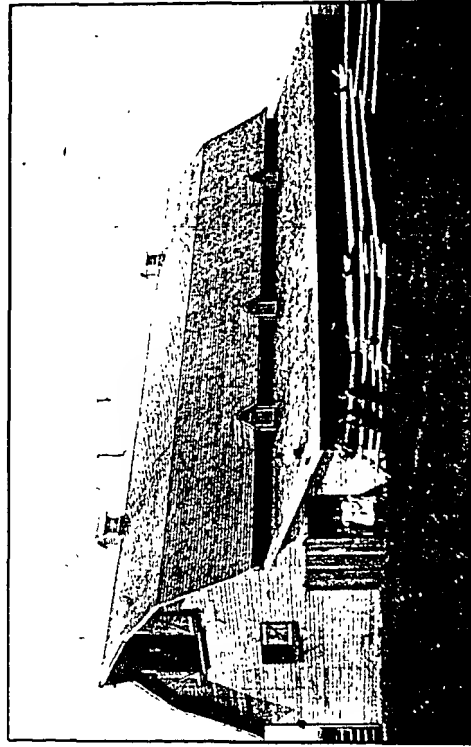
And it is not only in the raising of pure-breds that Lacombe holds a pre-eminent position. Some of the best grazing ranges in Alberta are in the district, and cattle graze out all winter, while steers are fattened on native hay without the supplement of grain and with no shelter but bluffs of timber and scrub. This is hard to credit, but hundreds are thus fattened each year. But the conditions under which they are raised on the ranges render them more or less wild and intractable, making it difficult to put them on the market in the same condition as when they leave the ranch. With its large area of choice agricultural lands, grains suitable for fattening and finishing cattle can be grown very cheaply. The ranchers and farmers have had marked success in finishing their cattle on grain. This is attested by the fact that more grain-fed cattle are shipped from Lacombe than from any other point in Alberta. The handling makes them tame and tractable, they stand shipping better, they can be marketed a year younger, and the price realized is higher. The industry has grown from half-a-dozen cars a few years ago to over one hundred cars during the last twelve months. As further evidence of the thriving condition of the industry, hundreds of head of stockers are brought in from the districts to the north and to the south to be fattened and finished at Lacombe.

Where such conditions prevail, the hog and the hen also have a place. The diseases common to swine in the southern climes do not exist here; a first-class quality of pork is produced on the small grains so easily grown. This industry has not developed enough to supply the demand, but it is growing rapidly, and regular shipments are now made, with very encouraging results from a financial standpoint, while the establishment of a pork-packing industry only awaits the arrival of the right man, who can be assured of every encouragement.

There is also a great field for poultry-raising. Up to the present the supply has not been equal to the local demand, to say nothing of the demand of British Columbia, which should be supplied from here. For years to come there will be a ready market for fat poultry and eggs. All that is required is more people to



ELEVATOR AND DEPOT AT LACOMBE



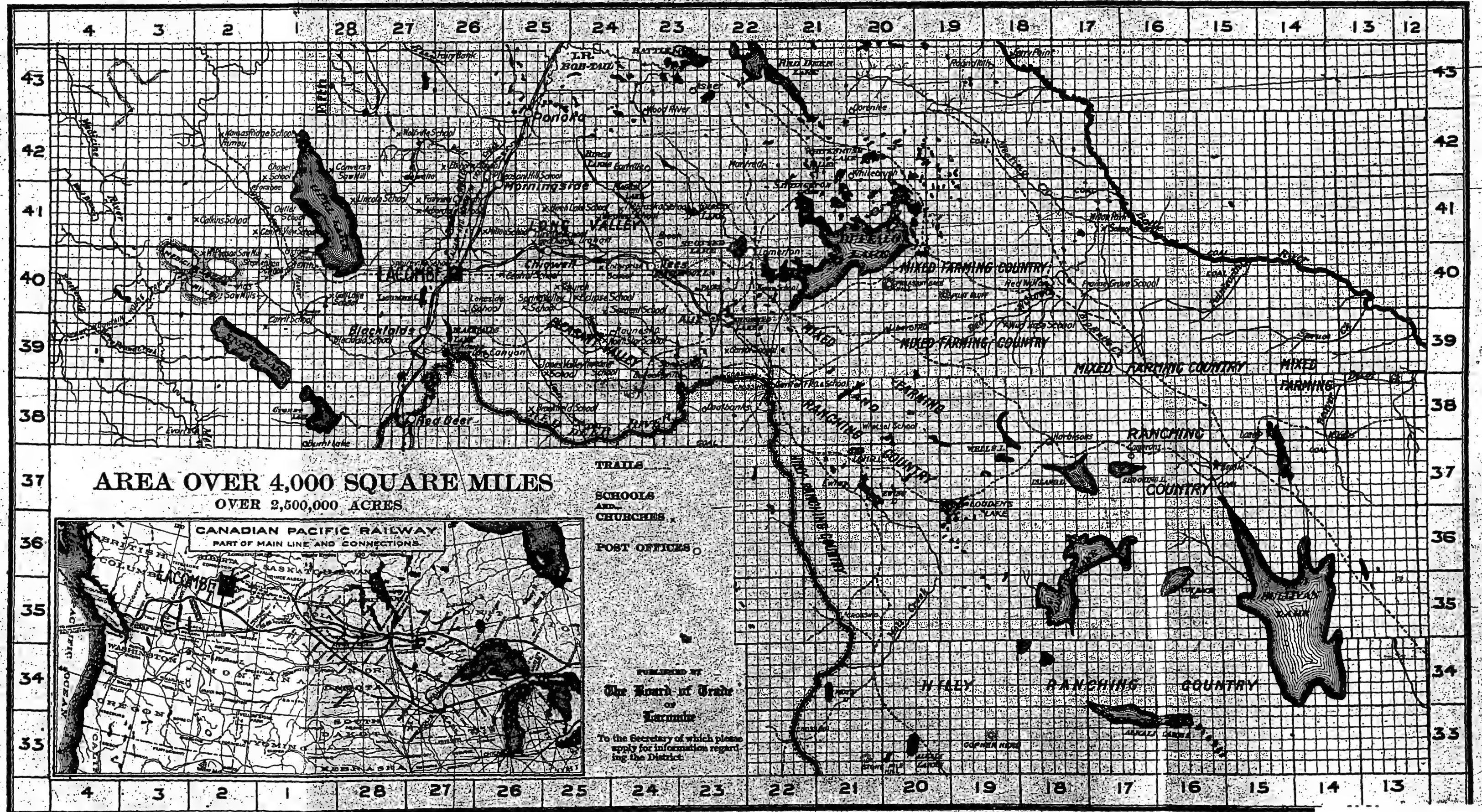
BARN OF HENRY TALBOT, NEAR LACOMBE

develop these branches of industry and, at the same time, improve their own circumstances and add to the wealth of a country endowed with such abundant resources.

With regard to dairying, there is no country that possesses the natural advantages for this particular branch of industry in such a marked degree. The luxuriant, limitless pasturage, the abundance of good water and the bracing atmosphere give vigor and healthfulness to stock and eliminate entirely diseases of a serious nature. To these conditions are attributed the large percentage of butter-fat and casein in the milk, which not only give the highest returns in butter but also excellence of quality. Winter dairying is exceptionally profitable, because grains and roots of all kinds are grown in abundance and good shelter easily and cheaply provided. Lacombe has one of the best creameries in building and equipment in the West. It was built and equipped, and is owned by the farmers, at a cost of six thousand dollars, and is operated by the Government, who pay an annual rental to the farmers and charge a nominal fee for making and marketing the butter. The butter is held in cold storage until a high price can be realized, but the farmer is advanced ten cents per pound at the end of each month and the balance in a lump sum at the end of the season. With a limited number of cows, well cared for, the farmer has a monthly source of income all the year round. One creamery, however, is altogether inadequate to the growing needs of the district, and it is only a question of a few years until a creamery or a cheese factory is within as easy reach of patrons as the schools and post-offices.

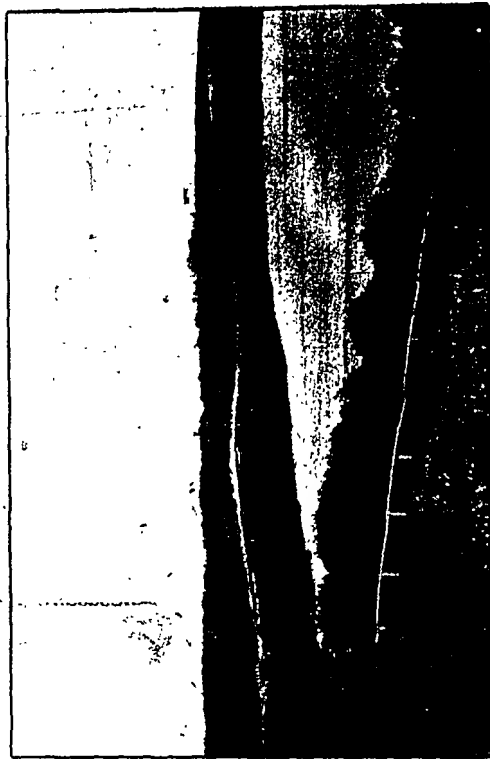
Until recently due attention has not been paid to the breeding of horses; but since the farmers have got into a position to build good barns and stables, they are going more extensively into this line of stock. The draft breed is the most popular, Clydesdales predominating. Horses weighing fourteen hundred pounds and upwards are now selling in Lacombe for from three hundred to four hundred dollars a team. The district has distinguished itself as a centre for pure-bred cattle, and there is no reason why it cannot attain

Map of the District of Lacombe Alberta, Canada





SCENE ON RED DEER RIVER



SCENE NEAR LACOMBE



GRAIN FIELD SCENE



FARM RESIDENCE OF W.B. MOONEY, NEAR LACOMBE.

FARM RESIDENCE OF J. M. KAY, NEAR LACOMBE.

FARM RESIDENCE OF P. H. SWITZER, NEAR LACOMBE.

FARM RESIDENCE OF C. T. DAYKIN, NEAR LACOMBE.

the same distinction as a horse-breeding centre. In addition to the local demand, there is always a good market in the lumbering camps of British Columbia for a heavy class of horses.

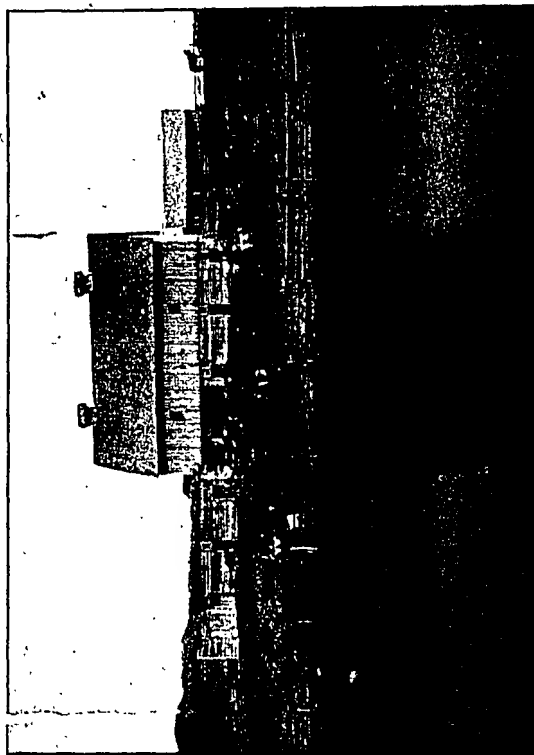
A large and ever-increasing acreage is devoted to cultivated crops. Up to the present, oats and barley have been the principal grains grown, the former yielding from fifty to one hundred bushels to the acre, while barley ranges from thirty to sixty bushels to the acre. Large quantities of oats are shipped every season. Owing to the good prices prevailing for oats, less attention has been given to the raising of wheat, but it has been grown successfully, and in the neighboring districts to the north, under the same conditions of soil and climate, it is grown quite extensively. There are eight flour-mills in operation in these districts, which give a stimulus to its cultivation. An up-to-date flour-mill at Lacombe would result in a largely increased acreage being devoted to wheat, and the time has arrived when the town and district would give suitable encouragement to the establishment of such a mill.

Excepting the tender varieties, such as tomatoes, melons, etc., root and garden crops yield enormous returns. It is no trouble to raise one thousand bushels of turnips to an acre, while beets, mangels, carrots and cabbages grow to such a size as to be positively embarrassing. Potatoes yield three hundred to four hundred bushels per acre—no bug picking needed. A visit to our fall fair is verification to any stranger. Turnips weighing twenty-four pounds each, cabbages twenty pounds, cauliflowers three feet in circumference, are common exhibits. On one occasion the directors offered a prize for a bushel of the largest potatoes, and the winning exhibit consisted of twenty-two potatoes which turned the scale at sixty pounds.

Reference to the map will give an idea of the general features of the district. Eight miles to the west of the town, Gull Lake, with an area of about forty square miles, is becoming a favorite summer resort. A number of cottages now dot its shores, and the matter of the erection of a first-class hotel there is being actively taken up. Already there are two small steamers; boating, bathing, fishing and shooting are



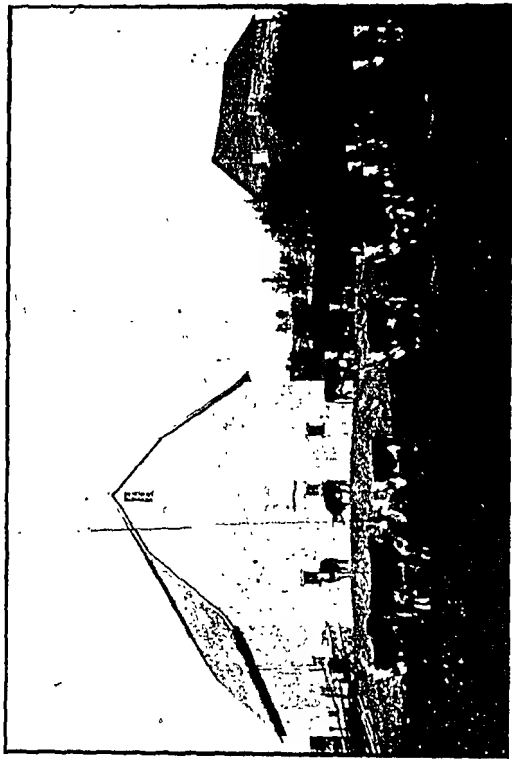
BARN OF SHARP BROS., LACOMBE



BARN AND CORRAL OF P. TALBOT, M.L.A.

pastimes that can be enjoyed amid surroundings as attractive and picturesque as any in the West, and there is no doubt Gull Lake is destined to become widely known to holiday-seekers. To the east there is Buffalo Lake, of still larger area, and affording the same natural advantages for sport and holidaying. Ducks, geese, prairie chickens, partridges and rabbits are plentiful, and afford not only sport but a welcome item in the menu. In the more sparsely settled parts the larger game, such as bear, deer and antelope, are sought successfully by the stealthy sport.

The intending settler, having satisfied himself of the magnificent natural resources of the district, will naturally ask, Where are the markets? and what are the facilities for the distribution of the produce the quantities of which are increasing so rapidly? What are the prevailing prices for what one expects to have to sell and to buy? The information will be true of the Territories as a whole, but it will not be out of place, and will be given with special reference to Lacombe. Taking the questions in their order: The Province of British Columbia and the Yukon Territory lie immediately to the west and north. They are undoubtedly the wealthiest divisions of the continent in minerals and timber; they are at the same time the poorest in agricultural resources. Here is, therefore, contiguous to us the best of all markets. Orders are constantly being received from this mining and timbering country for hay, grain, roots, beef, poultry and dairy produce, while the influx of new settlers creates a home market which must first be satisfied. But, with the rapidly increasing population and area of cultivation, the time is approaching when trainloads will be shipped for the carloads now shipped. The country up till now has been served by one line of railway, but we are on the eve of a period of railway construction of very large magnitude. A line starting from Lacombe is now under way, to be extended fifty miles east within a year, and it is to be still further extended in the immediate future. Another line is proposed running west of Lacombe, which railroad rumor credits



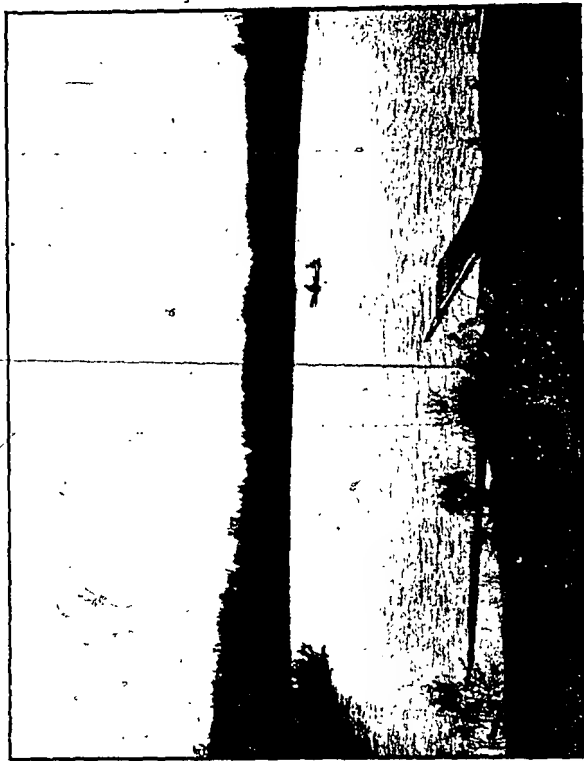
PURE-BRED HEREFORDS OF O. PALMER, LACOMBE



WINTER SCENE NEAR LACOMBE

with the ambition to cross the Rockies through the Yellowhead Pass and so on to the Pacific Ocean. Lacombe is assured of railway facilities throughout every part of its wide district.

The new settler will inevitably find the purchasing power of his money is less than in an old-settled country. The following prices will be of interest: Canadian farm wagons sell for from seventy-five to eighty-five dollars; stubble, sod, and brush plows for from nineteen to twenty-four dollars; mowers and binders at fifty-five and one hundred and fifty dollars, respectively. Lumber is cheaper at Lacombe than it is in either Manitoba or the Western States, while staple goods in groceries, meats, dry goods, boots and shoes and hardware will average on the whole about five to seven-and-a-half per cent. higher. The prices that obtain for farm produce will also be of interest: Wheat and barley have generally sold at the farmers' minimum standard of one cent per pound. Oats range in price from twenty to forty-five cents per bushel in one year, being lower in the fall and higher in the spring and summer. Potatoes fetch an average price of twenty-five cents per bushel, eggs twenty cents per dozen and butter seventeen-and-a-half cents per pound. As already pointed out, many millions of money will be expended during the next few years in and around the Lacombe District in railway construction, and this will create a clamorous home market and greatly enhance the prices of all kinds of farm produce, and there will also, at the same time, be a constant and ready demand for labor. Very prosperous years are thus in prospect for the farmers and settlers. And it should be also pointed out that, during the development of mining, timbering and railway construction, there will not only be an increased demand and prices for farm produce, but freights and prices of all commodities required by the farmer will be subject to a constant process of reduction. Lacombe is favorably situated to all the new markets being opened up, and, everything considered, at no time in its history or in the history of any country were conditions more favorable to the incoming settler or prospects of large returns for investment more assured than now.



PRETTY SCENE, NEAR LACOMBE



SCENE EAST OF LACOMBE

LETTERS FROM SETTLERS IN THE DISTRICT

KAMIMETOSOCK, Lacombe, September, 1904.

TO THE-LACOMBE BOARD OF TRADE:

Gentlemen,—I am in receipt of your letter asking me to state my experience and opinion of the Lacombe District as a farming country.

I have been farming here since 1893, and I think I may now state my opinion with some assurance. From my own experience and from what I see around me, I am convinced that this country is exceptionally well suited for mixed farming and that, prosperous at present, it will continue to advance in prosperity by "leaps and bounds." I see new settlers coming in with that idea and acting on it, and I see the older settlers acquiring more land and erecting new houses and farm buildings, while their stock and cultivated land are increasing rapidly. I know men who came into this district with little capital beyond their own industry and perseverance, who are in possession of several quarter-sections, with good buildings and numerous stock, and who grow large crops.

As regards grain, I do not think we are likely to compete with Manitoba in wheat-raising, but for barley and oats I believe this district cannot easily be beaten. We raise oats that compare favorably with those of Scotland and many bushels to the acre. There is a great future before us as a barley-growing country. When the new transcontinental railway is completed and we can lay down our grain on the Pacific Coast at a reasonable rate, I am convinced that a great trade in barley can be done. Even the six-rowed barley we at present grow compares very favorably with the Black Sea barley, so much of which is used in Great Britain. By growing the proper varieties and paying more attention to the crop, I believe we could grow a quality fine enough for the best brewers as well as for distilling purposes. Meantime, the hog absorbs all we have and pays a very good price for it.

Potatoes and roots of all kinds as well as garden stuff grow to a great size and of a very fine quality, with no danger from bugs or disease.

Horse-raising is a profitable industry. Good farm horses are in great demand, at high prices.

Cattle of all kinds do remarkably well. Fat cattle bring a remunerative price, while a large trade is done in stockers and breeding cattle. A large number of pure-bred cattle—Shorthorns and Herefords—are raised in the district. They are greatly sought by the ranchers, and the demand is far in excess of the local supply. Shorthorns and Herefords from the Lacombe District have been carrying away the honors and top prices from the fairs and sales from Edmonton to Calgary.

Hogs thrive very well and give very high returns. Pork is in constant demand at paying prices, and swine fevers are unknown here.

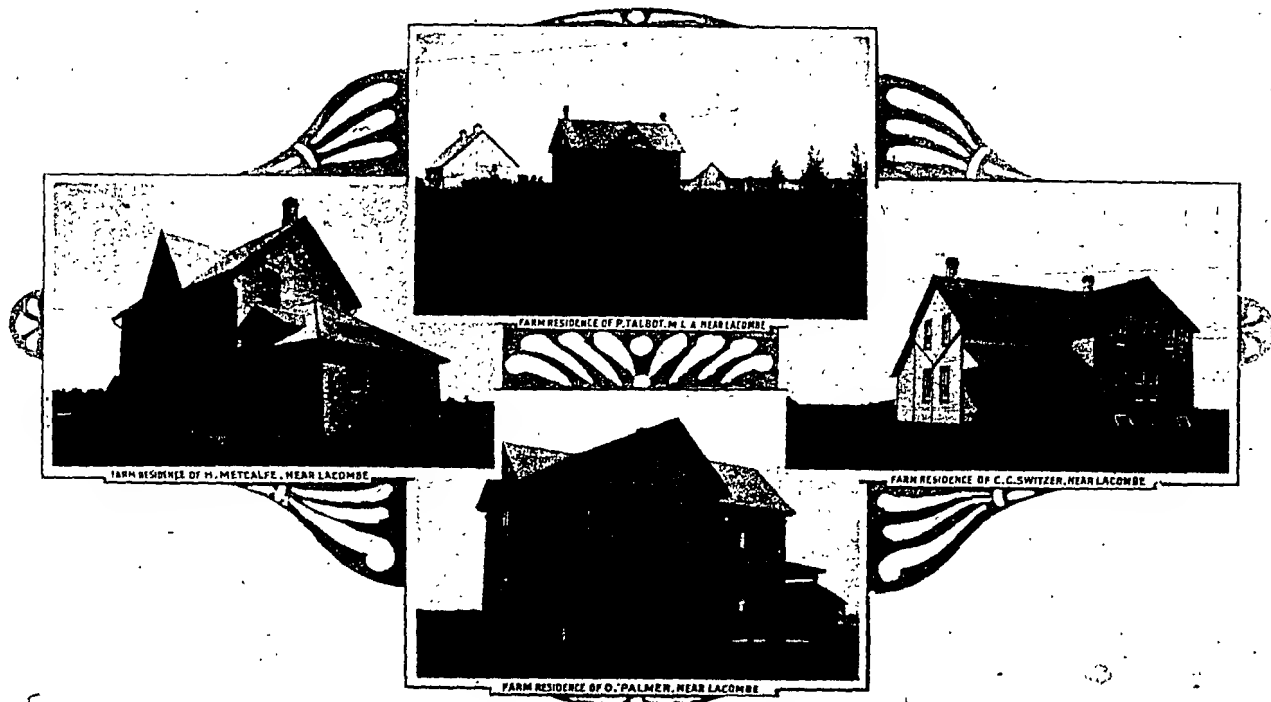
Eggs were thirty cents per dozen last winter, and cured ones at that. The creamery takes eggs at a fair price all the season. There is a ready sale for dressed poultry.

Dairying is paying well now, and there is a great future before it, and it will be one of the principal industries of the district, the climate and grasses of which seem well suited for the production of rich and well-flavored cream. We have now a modern and well-equipped creamery, run under Government auspices. An experienced and successful butter-maker is in charge, and the butter is kept in Government cold storage and sold on a favorable market. The sure monthly cheque, with a substantial balance at the end of the season, is ready cash to the settler, while the trouble of making and marketing the butter is done away with and the local market cleared for the sale of dairy.

The foregoing speaks for the quality of the soil, while the climate is good and healthy. The summers are not too hot, while the winters are bright and bracing, with no blizzards. Altogether, it is a good country to live in, and the people are finding that out. The farm next mine, bought a few years ago at four dollars per acre, this season has changed hands at thirty dollars per acre. That looks like an assured future.

Yours faithfully,

S. W. FINDLATER



LETTERS FROM SETTLERS IN THE DISTRICT

TO THE LACOMBE BOARD OF TRADE:

Gentlemen,—Replying to your request for a letter relating to my settlement and success in Alberta, I will say that I arrived in Lacombe June 27th, 1899. I had previously visited Yorkton, Regina and Prince Albert, and made an inspection of the country adjoining each place. I found the soil very similar throughout, the timber at Yorkton and Prince Albert much the same as here, and evidence of prosperity among the settlers everywhere. I gathered facts as to climate, crops, cost of raising stock, etc., at each point, and on comparing notes I concluded from all the data gathered that the winters were much milder and pleasanter here than at any of the points further east. This conclusion has been verified by my five years' residence here. When I first visited the District of Lacombe and settled in this valley of the Blindman River, there were but two homesteaders here. Now, the valley for thirty-five miles of its length is dotted with buildings, fields of grain and herds of cattle and horses. The development has been rapid and yet substantial. The settlers are chiefly from the United States, Eastern Canada and Great Britain. They are intelligent and progressive, and, as a rule, are more contented and more confident of the future greatness and richness of the district than is usual with the settlers of any land. The appreciation in the value of real estate and other property will fully meet the hopes and expectations of all of us. I came from Central Wisconsin, and have assisted in locating fourteen families from that state. Our winters are pleasanter than I have ever experienced in either the northern or southern states of the Union. We have no bad storms, the soil is rich and produces fine crops of roots and cereals, the water and grasses are excellent, and the chances for success unexcelled. There is still some homestead land to be obtained, and partly improved land can be bought in the settlement at figures that offer a splendid investment, for values are appreciating more rapidly than I have ever known in a new country entirely agricultural.

Yours very respectfully,

W. B. McPHERSON.

LONG VALLEY RANCH, Lacombe, September, 1904

TO THE LACOMBE BOARD OF TRADE:

Gentlemen,—In response to your request that I should give some of my experience in cattle-raising in this part of Alberta: I will begin by saying that I have now been in the country for sixteen years. During the first eight or nine years of this time I was engaged solely in raising cattle for the market, but this country has made such rapid progress and changed so much in the last seven years that I have found it more and more profitable to do a little farming also, and I am now convinced that as the country develops it shows plainly that what will pay the best from now on is mixed farming. The day for cattle-raising exclusively is gone with the loss of a range caused by the increase of settlement; but, in its place, has come a better condition of things, visible in the shape of thriving towns and well-kept homesteads, which have taken the place of the lonely stretches of land one used to see not so many years ago, and this I think we can safely say we owe in a great measure to the action of our present administration.

In conclusion, from my own experience I cannot say too much for the district; the produce shown at our fairs and markets is enough, surely, to show what can be done.

Yours truly,

E. M. H. PARLBY.



DONALD'S POLLED ANGUS CATTLE, LACOMBE

